

THE STRESS TEST

Stress isn't necessarily bad — it can stimulate positive change and growth. But excess stress can be detrimental. You can feel the effects of stress from a single large event or a series of small ones. A daily commute or ever-present background noise, if sustained or combined with other stressors, takes a toll. Research shows that as stress builds, you may become more susceptible to physical illness, emotional problems, and accidents.

Awareness is the first step in coping with stress. This test will help you tune in to your own signals. Some of the following symptoms could indicate a medical condition that warrants prompt attention, so if the symptoms persist or worsen, see your physician. However, there's a good chance they are signs that too much stress may be affecting your health.

If you suspect that stress may be a problem, remember that regular massage can gradually counteract these effects. Beyond that, you may want to see a physician or professional counselor for specific advice to manage your stress.

1. Do you experience regular insomnia?
2. Have your eating habits changed? Do you want to eat more than usual or have you lost your appetite?
3. Do you worry about bad things happening to your loved ones?
4. Do you have stomach aches or intestinal distress?
5. Do you have trouble concentrating?
6. Do you wake up in the middle of the night thinking about things you have no control over?
7. Do you lack energy to do the things you enjoy at the end of the day or on the weekend?
8. Do you feel listless or apathetic?
9. Are you tense or irritable at work or at home?
10. Have you lost your sense of humor?
11. Are you increasingly forgetful?
12. Do you feel you have lost control over your life?
13. Do your relationships or friendships feel unsatisfying?
14. Do you panic easily?
15. Are you often fatigued?
16. Do you get frequent colds or suffer from allergies?
17. Has your drinking or smoking increased?
18. Do you find it hard to relax or fall asleep at night?
19. Have you lost enthusiasm for your work?